

FIRST THINGS FIRST Director Mentoring Standards of Practice

Researchers and policy makers across the country are beginning to focus more on enhancing leadership and administrative skills among child care administrators in order to enhance program quality. Research has consistently found that having established and effective administrative practices are crucial for ensuring high-quality outcomes for children and families (Bloom 1989, 1996; Whitebook, Howes & Phillips, 1990). Without quality systems in place at the organizational level, high-quality interactions and learning environments at the classroom level cannot be sustained. Research tells us that the Director shapes the work environment for the teaching staff who, in turn, provide the critical link to children's developmental outcomes (Bloom & Sheerer, 1992; Phillips, Mekos, Scarr, McCartney & Abbott-Shim, 2000; Talan & Bloom, 2004). However, there are very few programs in the State of Arizona that provide specialized training and support to child care directors and administrators in a systematic manner. Arizona is not unique in its lack of leadership development programs. Although the call for specialized training for early care and education Directors and Administrators was made several decades ago (Bloom & Sheerer, 1992), many states are only just now beginning, in a systematic way, to include specialized leadership development for directors (NAEYC, 2010).

Goffin and Washington in their book, *Ready or Not: Leadership Choices in Early Care and Education* (2007), argue that in order to resolve the field's ever-shifting challenges, especially in the context of new realities – such as increasing public scrutiny and cut backs in state funding – it is necessary to move beyond reliance on a handful of individual leaders and key stakeholders and toward the creation of a community of diverse leaders.

The target populations that would benefit from successful implementation of these strategies are early care and education directors, family child care providers, and others in program leaderships roles working directly with staff who are working with children birth through age five and their families.

Programs implementing Director Mentoring will:

- Establish a mentoring program that includes effective/proven components of mentoring and that views mentoring as a core component of professional development — a replacement for less effective training modalities, rather than an additional service.
- Identify selection criteria for mentors/coaches and participating administrators/practitioners.
- Identify roles, responsibilities, and expectations of mentors/coaches and participating administrators/practitioners, including job descriptions, and other written documents.
- Develop cohorts of participants.

- Create a clear and multi-direction communication system between mentors and participants.
- Develop and implement individualized professional development plans that include specific outcomes for the protege.
- Establish mechanisms that support on-going professional development and support for mentors and participants:
 - Provide opportunities for mentors to improve mentoring/coaching skills through readings, peer dialogue and reflective practices and targeted activities that improve practice.
 - Provide mentoring/coaching to administrators that supports leadership development and administrative competency.
 - Provide mentoring/coaching to practitioners that supports and builds self confidence and self-efficacy in teaching (a belief in one's ability to be effective with children and families).
- Develop sessions for center administrators that address fiscal administration, systems management, human resource development, and related administrative skills/tasks.
- Design an evaluation process to assess system efficacy which should include but is not limited to the following evaluation components to ensure quality programming:
 - Pre and post test using measurement scales/questions that have been proven valid, and/or
 - Pre and post qualitative interview with specific questions that show causal relationships, to assist in the assessment of the quality of the services and/or programming
- “To address cultural competency objectives, early childhood practitioners/early childhood service providers shall ensure that children and families receive from all staff members effective, understandable, and respectful care that is provided in a culturally competent manner- a manner compatible with their cultural beliefs and practices and preferred language. Early childhood practitioners/early childhood service providers should ensure that staff at all levels and across all disciplines receive ongoing education and training in culturally and linguistically appropriate service delivery. Early childhood practitioners/early childhood service providers should develop participatory, collaborative partnerships with communities and utilize a variety of formal and informal mechanisms to facilitate community and family-centered involvement to ensure that services are delivered in a manner that is consistent with the National Standards on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services and/or the National Recommendations on Cultural and Linguistic Competence for the National Association for the Education of Young Children.”

<http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=2&lvlID=15> ;
<http://www.naeyc.org/positionstatements/linguistic>

Qualifications for a Director Mentor will include:

- Demonstrated knowledge and skills that reflect current best practices and research in Early care and Education.
- Possession of the minimum qualifications of adjunct faculty at a community college in early care and education or related field.
- A minimum of five years experience working with young children (with a combination of classroom and supervisory experience).
- Experience in providing adult education and knowledge of adult learning styles.
- Bilingual English/Spanish proficiency is preferred.
- Have demonstrated competencies or training in cultural competency.
- Demonstrated knowledge of the core values spelled out in the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct for early childhood adult educators and commit themselves to the following two core values:
 - To respect the critical role of a knowledgeable, competent, and diverse early childhood care and education workforce in supporting the development and learning of young children.
 - To base practice on current and accurate knowledge of the fields of early childhood education, child development, adult development and learning, as well as other relevant disciplines.

Director Mentoring programs delivering professional development opportunities will be required to ensure that opportunities are designed and implemented according to the following principles:

- Materials and sessions should be based on current research, core areas of competency, and early learning standards; and should be responsive to emerging issues in the community and the early childhood field.
- Curriculum should incorporate and reflect the theoretical framework that informs practice in the classroom/program and should include such topics as cultural competence and setting professional goals. Participants should be afforded opportunities for practical application of the theoretical foundation to real-life classroom/program activities and situations. Experiences should be relevant to the participant's background and current role.
- The length of employment and experience/education of staff are reflective of high quality staffing, therefore, instructors/mentors are required to possess:
 - appropriate credentials and experience in conducting professional development activities.
 - Demonstrated knowledge and skills that reflect current best practices and research in Early Care and Education.
 - Experience in early childhood education, elementary education with a concentration in early childhood, child and family studies, or a closely related field in order to meet the qualifications of adjunct faculty at the local community college.

- A minimum of five years experience working with young children ages birth through five, including a combination of classroom and supervisory experience. Experience working with adult learners and the ability to utilize active adult learning techniques.
- Bilingual English/Spanish preferred.
- Supervisors must meet or exceed these requirements with at least two years of program management experience. If programs experience hardship in recruitment efforts, they must notify and consult with First Things First.
- Sessions should engage participants as adult active learners and should employ adult active learning methodologies.
- Professional development should include opportunities for on-site technical assistance, mentoring, and supervision.
- An assessment should be implemented (such as a pre/post assessment) of the outcomes of the individual professional development plan before a certificate of completion is awarded.

References:

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